(b) whether only the disciplines of Architectural and Electrical Engineering have been covered, excluding the discipline of civil engineering;

(c) whether similar post for Civil Wing is to be created soon; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) Yes Sir, as indicated at (b) below.

(b) The post of Engineer-in-Chief (Elect.) was created personal to an officer in the Electrical discipline. The post of Architect-in-Chief in the Architectural discipline was created on the basis of recommendations of a Committee.

(c) and (d) The question of creation of a post at the level of Engineer-in-Chief in the Civil Wing is under examination. The policy in this regard will be evolved in relation to restructuring of the Hqs. of the Department of Telecommunications presently under consideration.

Disparities in Charges for STD/ISD in Hotels and Nursing Homes

2409. DR. ISHWAR CHANDRA GUPTA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Nursing Homes, Public Call Offices and Five Star Hotels charge the same rates for local, inter-State and international Calls from their customers as prescribed by the Department of Telecommunications; and

(b) if not, the reasons for variations in their rates?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) and (b) While Departmental Public Call Offices operating on franchise basis are charging the rates prescribed by the Department of Telecommunications for local, inter-state and international calls from their customers, some of the Nursing Homes and Five Star Hotels are known to be charging higher call charges for these services from their customers on account of the overheads relating to telecom equipment, operating charges and environmental facilities provided by them.

Mass Casual Leave by Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited Employees

2410. SHRI O. P. KOHLI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the employees of Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited went on mass casual leave on the 24th January in support of their demands, snapping the country's telecommunication links with the rest of the world; and

(b) if so, the details of their demands and the action Government propose to take to avert disruption of the country's telecommunication links?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) and (b) No Sir, there was no disruption of country's telecommunication links with the rest of the world on 24.1.1995. However, employees of VSNL had gone on mass casual leave on 24.1.1995 in support of their demand for issue of VSNL shares to them on preferential basis. The Government is taking all necessary steps to settle the issue.

Improvement of Telecommunication Services

2411. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any

proposal to improve the quality of telecommunication services in the country;

(b) whether some new schemes are being launched for this purpose; and

(c) if so, the details of specific schemes drawn up and the steps taken to improve telecommunication services in the tribal and inaccessible areas, particularly in Orissa?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) Yes Sir.

(c) The telecom services of tribal and inaccessible areas are being upgraded. The specific schemes drawn to improve quality of telecom. services are as:—

(i) New electronic switches are being inducted into the network to upgrade and modernise the services.

(ii) New modern tools and testing aids are being introduced.

(iii) Upgradation/Rehabilitation of outdoor network.

(iv) Provision of reliable transmission media.

(v) Computerised telephone billing is being introduced in a phased manner.

(vi) Constant monitoring of performance.

(vii) Providing reliable public telephones in villages through Radio Wireless system.

(viii) Upgrading the skills of technical staff through periodical training programmes.

(ix) Tribal sub-plan (1992—97) of Orissa envisages installation of 48 number of telephone exchanges, addition of a net switching capacity of 13200 lines and 8200 telephone connections. 155 stations are planned to be provided with STD facility.

Multiple Operators in the same Switch Area

2412. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the new telecom policy envisages multiple operators working in the same switch area;

(b) if so, whether these operators will be operating through underground cable network; and

(c) how the efficiency of telecom. services can be ensured in the context of multiple ducts for telecom operators, as well as operations of other agencies like water supply, electricity, etc. also acting underground?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) Yes Sir. As per the guidelines issued by the Government to implement the National Telecom Policy, in addition to DOT, there will be one private operator per Telecom Circle to provide telephone services.

(b) The conditions of tender document, which has been floated for inviting bids from Indian companies, provide that copper cable can be used only in the last 500 meters of the subscriber loop. Remaining part of the network will use wireless of optical fibre cables. While in the case of wireless, use of underground space will not be required, in the case of optical fibre cable, due to its very high capacity, requirements of underground space will be minimal.

(c) The operator will be required to adhere to the specifications and standards laid down by the competent telecom authority to ensure efficiency of telecom services. Such activities will have to be carried out in co-ordination with other agencies using underground space.